

October 10, 2012 3:21:06 PM

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mark Deming, Chairman, called the regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission to order on Thursday, July 12, 2012 at 7:34 a.m. in the Main Meeting Room at the Town Offices. The following members and were also present: Allan R. Raphael, Louis George, David Balboni, Shannon Knall, and Kris Barnett. Also in attendance was Lisa Heavner, Board of Selectmen, Gerry Wetjen, member of the Culture, Parks and Recreation Commission, and other interested parties.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - May 10, 2012

Commissioner George made a motion to approve the minutes from the May 10, 2012 regular meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Raphael and was passed unanimously with one abstention, as Commissioner David Balboni was not present at the May meeting.

III. REPORTS

FVVA - Nancy Anstey reported to the Commission saying FVVA held their First Annual Old Fashioned Picnic, at the Hill-Stead Museum, which was a big success. Ms. Anstey also spoke about the upcoming Film Fete. She spoke about some other events they are currently working on and said they are pulling the advertising together for the 2013 Farmington Valley Guide.

SMSP - Rich Correia, President SMSP, provided an update to the Commission. He began by stating they are working on Mission Small Business, sponsored by Chase, which is a national program and spoke of the Simsbury businesses up for the available grants. Mr. Correia said there are two (2) Talcott Mountain music events left. Mr. Correia also spoke of their work in preparation for both the "Taste in Simsbury" and the Gala for the PBS Documentary "Seeking the Greatest Good". The "Discover Simsbury" pieces, within the Hartford Courant, were discussed briefly. Mr. Correia mentioned he and Sara Nielsen would be meeting with Canton EDC on August 8th at 6PM in the Canton Library Building. Commissioner Deming asked everyone to look at the work schedule Ms. Nielsen put together in order to see how the EDC

and SMSP can work to influence an increase the tax base in Simsbury. He asked people to prepare for discussion on this topic for the next meeting. Commissioner Deming also threw out some questions to Mr. Correia as topics of discussion for the next meeting regarding calculation of ROI (return on investment), town wide mailings, timing of Farmer's Market, and others.

IV. SIMSBURY FARMS COMPLEX - Enterprise Fund alternative

Gerry Wetjen, member of the Culture, Parks and Recreation Commission, was in attendance to discuss the topic of creating a stand-alone Enterprise Fund for Simsbury Farms. Mr. Wetjen stated that he would like to look at running the Farms as a business, because that is really what it is. He gave some statistics on revenue and then spoke about the problems that come along with being run under the Town's budget process. He said, while it would remain an asset of the Town, it would be run separately from the Town's budget. Mr. Wetjen then spoke about some benefits that come along with running the Farms under an Enterprise Fund, such as being able to self-fund most necessary capital improvements. Mr. Wetjen said it is a constant battle to get the funds in order to run the facility the way it should be run. Commissioner George asked how the current employees at the facilities would be affected. Mr. Wetjen explained that they are still employees of the Town, but said everything is in the Enterprise Fund, as opposed to being under the Selectmen's budget. Ferg Jansen, commented how this would also help to put the financials for Simsbury Farms on a calendar basis, as it does not make sense to run the facility under the Fiscal Year the Town operates under. The accounting of the proposed Enterprise Fund were discussed by Mr. Wetjen and Commissioner Balboni. Mr. Wetjen again spoke about the ability to fund the Farm's capital expenses under the Enterprise Fund. When asked by Commissioner Deming about any downside to the Enterprise Fund, Mr. Wetjen said if it is burdened with too much debt at the onset, it will not be successful. Commissioner Deming asked Ms. Heavner what the Board of Selectmen's stance is on this subject and she replied they have not considered this yet, so there is no formal opinion. Ms. Heavner and Mr. Wetjen discussed how the numbers would shake out and Ms. Heavner said she thinks this topic warrants consideration, but the numbers need to make sense. Commissioner Raphael said Simsbury Farms is a huge asset to the community and this Enterprise Fund option should be taken under consideration. Commissioner Balboni mentioned raising the golfing rates in order to increase revenue, and Mr. Wetjen then spoke about the local competition for non-resident rounds. He said they need to attract non-residents in order to continue providing the great value to the residents. Mr. Wetjen again spoke of the importance of maintaining this asset. Commissioner Knall asked about promotion of the Farms in order to increase non-resident play and Mr. Wetjen said they are doing promotions/ advertising in order to attract new players. Ms. Heavner mentioned the management consultant they previously hired to look at PAC and suggested that might be helpful in this case as well. Commissioner George asked Mr.

Wetjen about the ice rink and if there were ways to increase revenue generation for that facility. This topic was discussed briefly. Mr. Correia said SMSP is happy to help out how they can in their efforts to promote Simsbury Farms.

V. STATE GRANTS: Up to \$500k available per Town; possible uses for Simsbury

Mr. Correia said they are going for the grant and they would like to work with the EDC in order to bring the funds to Simsbury. He continued by saying they have met with Mr. Peck and the Board of Selectmen on this topic. When asked, Mr. Peck said it needs to be used to promote economic growth and job creation. Mr. Peck said he has suggested a few ideas. Mr. Peck also spoke about the Planning Department and its role in generating revenue, by helping to create a more development-friendly environment. When Mr. Deming asked about timing, Mr. Correia said it will be submitted in September. Commissioner George said he thinks it is vital that the EDC is fully involved in the decision-making process for this grant application. Commissioner Deming requested that Mr. Peck and Mr. Correia keep him informed of any meetings so the EDC will be aware and represented. The grant application process was discussed. Commissioner Balboni made the comment that even though he thinks it is embarrassing that such an affluent Town would accept State grant money (with the State of CT being in such poor financial shape) when we don't even know what it will be used for, he would vote for it if the money were used to pay down existing debt. Commissioner George said he thinks while there are projects along Main Street for which the grant money could be used, there are also things outside of Main Street that warrant consideration. Mr. Peck said he thinks they need to form a unified front in order to successfully apply for this grant. Commissioner Deming discussed the possibility of holding a joint meeting with Board of Selectmen, SMSP and EDC. Mr. Peck said it would be helpful to get ideas from the EDC members as quickly as possible, as there is limited time for the preparation of the application. Commissioner George asked about what specific ideas are currently being considered and Mr. Peck said there have been a number of ideas thrown out; including street-scape improvements and parking in town center, among others. Commissioner George said he wanted to throw in the idea of developing a recreational nature-destination along Iron Horse Boulevard from Main Street down to the river. Commissioner George said he wants to be involved in this process because he wants to make sure this idea is considered. Commissioner Deming requested Mr. Peck schedule a joint meeting be set up in order to allow ideas to be presented/considered.

VI. AUGUST MEETING SCHEDULE

The upcoming schedule was discussed by the Commission members and it was decided that the regularly scheduled August meeting would be canceled and Commissioner Deming and Mr. Peck would work on coordinating a special

meeting to discuss the State Grant application process.

Commissioner Knall made a motion to cancel the regularly scheduled meeting of the Economic Development Commission for August 9, 2012. The motion was seconded by Commissioner George and was unanimously passed.

VII. OLD BUSINESS/NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Heavner announced that Rep. Linda Schofield and Selectmen John Hampton will be hosting a special forum highlighting the 2012 Legislative Session, the Jobs Bill and other critical initiatives supporting business and manufacturing, which will be held on July 25th at 7PM at Eno Hall.

Mr. Correia spoke briefly about the proposed BigY going into the Wagner property on Route 10.

Commissioner Balboni requested they discuss the potential impact of the pending events related to The Hartford at the next meeting, saying he thinks the EDC needs to get a lot of dialogue going on this subject. Ms. Heavner said Mary Glassman, First Selectmen, would be able to provide an update on what is happening.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner George made a motion to adjourn the regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission at 9:06 a.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Raphael and was unanimously passed.